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THE

# SERAPH OF ASSISIUM

BY

REV. TITUS JOSLIN.

*SUPERIORUM PERMISSU.*

"Si quid apte et bene compositum invenitur tibi Maria omnium datrici referatur:—si quid vero sylvestre rude ac rusticum reperiatur mihi omnium minimæ creaturæ adscribatur."—SYLVEIRA.

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# Portrait of St. Francis,

FROM THE

*LEGEND COMPOSED BY ORDER OF POPE GREGORY IX.*

"Our Blessed Father was agreeable to all. Joy, serenity, kindness, and modesty were perceptible in his countenance. He was naturally mild and affable, compassionate, liberal, prudent, discreet, gave sound advice, was faithful to his word, and full of courage. He was easy in his manners, accommodating himself to all sorts of tempers, he was all to all, he was a saint among the saintly, and among sinners as if he was one of them; his conversation was graceful, and his manner insinuating; close in his reasoning, energetic and compliant in matters of business; and finally, simple in his actions and words. He was of middle size, neither short nor tall, but well shaped. His face was oval, his forehead smooth, his eyes black and modest, his mouth pretty, his hair of chestnut colour; his beard black, but scanty, his body very thin, his skin delicate, his speech pleasing and animated, his voice strong and piercing, but altogether mild and sonorous."

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# PREFACE.

"THE example of the Saints," says St. Bernard, "rouses the courage of sinners, and fortifies the courage of the just."

Could the reader of the following pages have stood in the porch of a certain church of the city of Rome in the early part of the 13th century, he would one day have remarked, leaning against one of the pillars, a figure of middle size, clothed in a habit of ash gray color, with knotted cord reaching from his waist to the ground. Beneath his hood might be discovered a face worn with suffering, black eyes, delicate skin, hair of a chestnut color. His speech is pleasing and ani-

mated, his voice strong yet mild and sonorous. It is St. Francis, the "poor beggar of Christ," the Seraph of Assisium.

Poverty of spirit lies hid beneath that outward destitution, and within the slender frame beats a heart whose desires are those of one who delights in the Lord. So subdued himself, he has a strange power of subduing, with a breath, everything wild and unruly that comes in his way. The outline of his life, dear reader, is before you; and if you, at the conclusion of its perusal, wish that you too might taste the sweetness of God, call to mind St. Bernard's definition of the reward promised to purified hearts:

"PEACE IS THE TRANQUILITY OF ORDER."

THE

# SERAPH OF ASSISIUM.

## CHAPTER I.

### BORN IN A STABLE.

In the year of our Lord 1182 a little child is born at Assisi a town of Umbria in Italy, under circumstances not unlike those which attended the birth of our Saviour in Bethlehem; his birthplace a stable, his cradle a bundle of straw. He is the child of Roman Catholic parents, that same little model of

our infant Lord. They take him to be christened. A stranger presents himself as godfather and is accepted. Who the stranger is no one knows. After he has gone, they examine the marble steps near the baptismal font, where he knelt in thanksgiving, and find upon them the impress of his knees. When they get home, another man is waiting, who seems to have been sent by God. He begs that he may be allowed to see the child and hold it. He takes it in his arms, caresses it, warns the nurse to have more than common care of it, for fear of the devil's rage, and disappears. That little child will one day be a saint, honored on Catholic altars, loved and reverenced by future generations. But God does nothing in

a hurry. The stone on which a new edifice is to be built is rough and imperfect. By repeated strokes of the hammer it must be prepared for its place in the walls of the heavenly city. That little child has yet to learn the art of dying to himself, that he may live to God.

## CHAPTER II.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Years roll on. The child grows up to be a boy, and ripens into manhood. Though attached to the world, fond of company to excess, extravagant in his dress—still he fears God, and holds impurity in abomination. His father scolds

him for his extravagance, but scolding does not change him. His patient and gentle mother told the neighbors they would see a difference when the boy came to maturer years. She knew he had faults, but she knew too that his temper was exquisitely mild and condescending, that he was generous to an extreme, that he had great good sense, and one thing above all, she had remarked from infancy, viz., that God had implanted deep in his heart great feelings of compassion for the poor. The expectations of that patient mother were not disappointed. The mild and gentle lady Pica never regretted that she had been patient with the boy's imperfections. We will suffer another space of years to pass on, and transport our-

selves to the church of St. Damian in his native town.

## CHAPTER III.

### CHURCH OF ST. DAMIAN.

A PALE and emaciated figure kneels before the altar at the hour of noon. His dress is coarse, and a leathern girdle keeps it about him. His hands uplifted in prayer are rough and unseemly and show marks of wear. He has been engaged in repairing the church, and bringing the stones, and putting them up, and superintending the masons himself: God told him one day to do it. A voice spoke from the crucifix:—"Go and repair my church which

thou seest is falling." He gave the parish priest money to keep a lamp burning before that crucifix, and himself went through the streets begging stones for the love of God, and begging too his own slender sustenance. If you watch him attentively you will notice that he is thinly clad; as he prays he shivers with cold. His brother Angelo makes sport of his distress; and whispers to one beside him, "Go and ask that man to sell you a little of his sweat." The messenger does his errand. "I do not choose to sell my sweat to men, I can sell it at a better price to God." That is the answer. Do you ask me who that toil worn laborer is, who has made up his mind to work for God, who knows how to

give good pay? He is the same who but a few years before worked so hard and fruitlessly for the admiration of a selfish and ungenerous world; in the love of which he was entangled. What, you ask, has made such a difference. With God's help I will try to tell you.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE THOUGHT OF ETERNITY.

A WORK which God only could accomplish, was to detach the heart of Francis from everything vain. The towns of Assisi and Perugia were at war. Himself made prisoner, got hard usage, and no sooner once more at liberty than he was prostrated by a

severe sickness. Yet weak, but convalescent, to oblige a company of friends he entertains them by a party of pleasure. It is the last.

What new sensation has come over him, just returned home from the feast? He feels like a man awakened from a dream, penetrated with a conviction of the vanity of the world and the grandeur of heaven, by a communication so forcible as to deprive him of feeling, yet mild and penetrating. As he said himself afterwards, had he been torn in pieces at that moment he would not have known it: he felt only at the bottom of his soul. The work is done. "How the earth becomes vile when I look upon heaven!" What a magnificent favor. From hence-

forth heaven is the mark: guard me, O God, for I am a saint "*Sanctus proposito.*" A saint since heaven and the God of heaven is my aim.

## CHAPTER V.

### CORRESPONDING WITH GRACE.

With all his faults, serious ones too, that might have brought him to ruin, the life-giving Spirit had breathed upon the germs of future sanctity which lay hid in the soul of Francis. His compassion for the poor had drawn down on himself the compassion of God, and the love of the Immaculate Virgin. "Never," said he, "when it is in my

power to give, will I refuse an alms, asked for the love of God." Devoted to works of charity and to prayer, already our saint had begun to receive lessons from the Spirit of God, who made him feel that the most difficult and important thing that remained was to make the attempt to gain one good victory over himself. Opportunities presently offered.

There was a man whose lips and face had been eaten away by a dreadful cancer. Francis, walking the street, saw him approaching. Shall he turn away from the loathsome object? It is the first impulse. But no, he will not, but runs up to him, embraces him, and kisses the cancerous face, which is immediately healed. "I know not," says

St. Bonaventure, "which most to admire, such a kiss or such a cure."

Riding one day across the plains of Assisi, he perceived in the distance a loathsome object making up to him. It was a leper. At first sight he felt horror-stricken. Gladly would he have turned his horse's head to get out of that sick man's way. No, he will not do it. See him dismount, and kiss him, and give him some money. Need we wonder that after that he prayed with fervor, on fire with the love of God, whose heart he had won? Listen to the words which he heard one day as he knelt before his crucifix: "Francis, if you desire to know my will, you must despise and hate all that you have loved and wished for till now.

Let not this new path alarm thee, for if the things which now please thee must become bitter and distasteful, those which now displease thee will become sweet and agreeable." Thenceforth, as for the lepers, he was their devoted servant, washed them and tended them, and a little before his death declared that what had seemed to him most bitter in such occupation, had been changed into what was pleasing both for soul and body.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HE LOVES HIS CRUCIFIX.

The love of God had become so strong in the heart of St. Francis, that

it gave him sensible sweetness to pronounce His holy name, or that of His blessed Mother, so delicious the taste. The sight of Jesus Christ fastened to the cross, made him feel the misery of the poor so intensely, that he would strip himself to clothe them, and go without bread to save them food. His eyes became red with weeping, his sobs and groans could be heard outside the church. "I weep," said he, "because others do not at what my Lord suffered." There was a rock on Mount Alverno, in which was a huge fissure, said to have been split by the earthquake which happened at the crucifixion. Thither he retired to reflect in the bitterness of his soul on the time that he loved God too little. In a word, St.

Francis of Assisium had been favored with a taste of heaven, an appreciation of its magnificence which he never forgot. He had ceased to love the world and the things that were in the world, save after the manner that God had loved them. His eye had caught a glimpse of the city of the saints, and whatever he did he never took his gaze off that fair vision, save to turn it in love either on the Crucified Himself, or the miseries of His suffering members. What were the fruits?

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PURIFIED HEART.

"GIVE me," said St. Philip Neri, "ten men truly detached from the world, and I have the heart to say that I will convert the world with them." The remainder of this sketch will be devoted to showing how St. Francis, by the grace of God, detached from this world, did more than his tenth part of that work, and the means by which he accomplished it. God's love, like a burning fire, seeks fuel that it may consume. The world was the fuel, the heart of Francis contained the spark out of God's own furnace, which would become a blazing firebrand.

Then, as now, the world was full of men whose faith was dull, whose hope was faint, whose charity was little. Because their iniquity had abounded their charity had grown cold. The work which then only a saint sent by God could have the heart to set his shoulder to, was equalled only by the magnitude of the evil which had to be surmounted. Faith must be woke up. Men must be made to realize that the rewards waiting for the good were greater than could be conceived, the torments reserved for the wicked awful beyond the power of human description.

Hope must be revived. Men must some way be made to feel that the three hours' agony of Jesus Christ was a fact, which at three o'clock on Good

Friday afternoon opened forever the gates of heaven to as many as would take the trouble to enter in.

Charity, dear precious charity, the apple of God's eye, the love of God and our neighbor, must be distilled once more into souls from whence it had departed. Frozen hearts must be warmed and melted. Here was what was to be done upon the earth we inhabit, in the year of our Lord 1208, and to do all this God then found one man who was fit, His chosen servant Francis, the Seraph of Assisium. How, then, did he go about it?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MILD POWER IS GREAT.

THERE is an expression which has, if memory serves me, been adopted as a motto by certain German medical writers, which at the present juncture I am going to press into the service, and make do homage to the honor of St. Francis. Short, but full of meaning—it is this: *The mild power is great.* It will serve us better, and remain as true, if I reverse it: The great power works mildly. Men, the world over, have an instinctive respect for power, force, anything that will do something, that will seem of itself to act, and act to the purpose. Action may be silent

or noisy. In either case, according as it attains its legitimate end, it is esteemed, be that end a physical result, or the change of a human heart. Ordinarily, a little force applied in the right direction does the work. Now for an application of our principle. The great power works mildly. There is no greater or more efficient power than the Spirit of God. His works are magnificent. He breathed, and man became a living soul. He brooded over the waters, at the creation, and forthwith they were alive with animation, full of fishes. A Spirit all powerful, while it reaches from end to end mightily, at the same time it disposes all things sweetly. For how many of ourselves, within our own weak recollection, has

that loving Spirit disposed things most powerfully, and yet with surpassing sweetness attained results we never could have anticipated.

That greatest of all powers, Omnipotence itself, is by nature a mild and gentle spirit, though so mighty. Mighty and penetrating, mighty and discerning, mighty, yet so mighty that it can afford to work slowly, and unobserved, and gently, so long as it gains its end, the reconciliation of a sinner.

As in creation, so also in regeneration, God's Spirit never loses its gentle character.

Whether we regard it present with the Heart of God in heaven, or the Heart of Jesus on earth, it performs its most beautiful conversions of sinners to

God, by touching the most hidden and delicate strings in the hearts of individual men. Brute force of itself never does anything, though God knows how to turn it sometimes to account as an occasion of good.

The thundering eloquence of the most fiery saints would never have accomplished anything, did not their words carry wrapped up in outward severity the touching vibrations which revealed the presence of God's gentle Spirit, and did God's work, and found a response in the heart of the hearer, a something which whispered while the speaker thundered, and said, "My soul, believe me, that is God's voice,—listen to him—believe him—he speaks the truth." The

mild power is great. Peace to men of good will.

Animated from above with the gentle spirit of peace, the Seraph set out on his mission, not only to proclaim it, but also to communicate it. He was full of it himself. His body mortified and subdued, his soul having tasted the sweetness of God, and ready to give every body who came within hearing distance of him a relish for heaven. Wherever he went men must feel that the peace of God meant something more than an empty name.

Clothing himself in a hermit's tunic, coarse, rough, and of an ash-gray color, with a hood which covered sufficiently the head and face, in the year 1208

Francis went forth to preach, to exhort sinners to repentance, and to cause our Lord's counsels no less than his commands to be loved in the world. Men found him a very plain-spoken man and unpretending, but a fire glowed in his face which was not to be mistaken; and every sentence that went forth from his blessed lips was solid and animated with the Spirit of God, and so effectually penetrated the hearts of his hearers that every one was surprised at it. "May the Lord grant you His peace," words which he declared had been revealed to him, were always the first sounds that fell on the ears of his auditors. And God did grant his peace to thousands to whom that salutation came, so that men looked upon him as an an-

gel sent from heaven to draw down upon them every blessing.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SCHOOL OF ST. FRANCIS.

It was soon noised abroad that a man was in the world whose life and actions bore a close resemblance to those of Jesus Christ, with whose love he burned, whose passion he mourned. Men heard him preach. The spark fell and caught, and others wished that they might live with him, and go about with him, and learn his secret of attracting hearts, as the disciples did of our blessed Lord. The first whom he accepted was Bernard

de Quintavalle, and the way it happened was this. He invited the saint to supper, pressed him to stay all night, and had a bed prepared for him in his room. Bernard made believe to sleep. The lamp still burned. Francis arose, fell on his knees, melted into tears, and with eyes raised to heaven, and arms crossed, pronounced slowly these words, "Deus meus et omnia—My God and my all," which he repeated during the whole night. This and other proofs of his sanctity were enough for Bernard, who resolved to give all his riches to the poor, and follow him forthwith. This he did in the square of St. George, at Assisi, divesting himself of his money to receive in return the gold of God's charity, and the love of St. Francis, who then gave him a dress like

his own, called him his eldest son, and was always tenderly attached to him. It was not long before six companions in all, after the heart of St. Francis, strove with him to conform men to the heart of God. "Go," said he to them one day, "and exhort men to do penance for the remission of their sins and for peace. Some will be mild and good and listen to you, others will despise you. Be patient in tribulation, fervent in prayer, fearless in labor, unassuming in speech, grave in your manner, grateful for the favors and benefits you may receive. The kingdom of heaven, which is eternal, will be your reward."

He then divided the routes they were to take, by forming a cross which pointed to the four quarters of the globe. Tak-

ing one for himself and a companion, he sent the other six, two and two, to the other sides.

Whenever they came to a church they prostrated themselves with these words, taught them from God :—" We adore Thee, O most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Thy churches which are in the whole world, and we bless Thee for having redeemed the world by Thy holy cross." They had a great veneration for all chapels, crosses, and every thing that had any relation to the worship of God. As soon as any one addressed them, they wished him peace, and taught him how to gain it. If any one seemed to them to be going wrong, and in danger of losing his soul, they strove to bring him back in a mild and

humble manner. In their sermons, whatever the Holy Ghost inspired them, over and above their own due preparation, that they spoke; pointed out the true way to heaven, showed what were the duties of charity, and endeavored to bring all to love and fear God and keep His commandments.

When they were asked from what country they came, and to what profession they belonged, they answered, "We are penitents from Assisi."

## CHAPTER X.

### A NEW ORDER.

Francis having returned to the hut at Rivo Torto whence they parted, and

where in the meantime he had obtained four new disciples, full of tenderness for his children on the mission, began to feel as though he would like to see them all together again, and prayed God to bring them back. The six returned to Assisi from various places as though they had acted in concert, and related with joy to the new community the outrages and blows they had been found worthy to suffer in the service of Jesus Christ. It was at this time that Francis foreseeing in his little community a future order in the Catholic Church, told them it was time to give an account of themselves to the holy Roman Pontiff and secure his approbation. "Let us go" said he, "and find our mother the holy Roman Church.

Let us make known to our holy father the Pope, what God has deigned to begin through our ministry, in order that we may pursue our course according to his will, and under his orders." St. Paul, returned from the third heaven, would undertake no new labor till he had consulted the then reigning Pontiff St. Peter, and made a journey to Jerusalem for the purpose. Neither would Francis undertake aught without the approbation of Peter's successor, saint though he was. The little company set out for Rome, praying and talking of God and holy things as they went.

Innocent III., at the time Francis obtained an audience with him, was engaged in talking of some important

affairs of the Church, and dismissed him abruptly. The saint, as he retired, restored sight to a blind man in the street. The same night the Pontiff had a vision. A palm at his feet grew up to be a great tree, and God made him understand that the tree was Francis and his new order. In the morning search is made for the poor petitioner, and at last he is found in the hospital of lepers, and conducted back to the palace. Again the Pope has a vision. A poor man is seen to support on his shoulders the Lateran Basilica, which is falling to ruins. God puts it in the Pontif's heart to grant the approbation, and the little party return home in joy, the new order of St. Francis, another gem in the diadem of Christ's

spouse, another joy to the heart of Mary.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A PRESENT FROM THE HOLY VIRGIN.

Pope Innocent III., was not mistaken when he said of Francis, "truly it is that man who will support the Church of Jesus Christ by his works and by his teaching." A deacon by the imposition of the holy Father's own hands, the Seraph leads back his little flock of disciples, often stopping by the way to deliberate on the best means of making themselves examples of holy lives for others. On more than one occasion heaven smiled on them,

and by miraculous providence supplied their wants. Absorbed in God and the discussion of his interests, they forgot one day their usual repast till the fatigue of travel reminded them that there was no food to be had. A man they had never seen, brought them a loaf and disappeared—bread that left their souls replenished with consolation and the love of poverty, and their bodies with unwonted strength. Returned to the valley of Spoleto, their increasing numbers, no less than a revelation received by Francis, made them feel the want of some suitable and more commodious residence than they had yet possessed, and here our Blessed Lady gave them a visible proof of her love, and made them a present. How did our

Lady do this? she had a church which was very dear to her, and she put it into the heart of the Benedictine Abbot of Mount Soubrazo to give it to them.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS.

In the year 352, four hermits came from Palestine to Italy, and obtained from Pope Liberius, permission to settle in the valley of Spoleto. There they built a church, and put in it a piece of the Blessed Virgin's sepulchre, and called it St. Mary of Josaphat. At a later day, the Benedictines called it St. Mary of the Angels. The neigh-

boring peasantry testified that more than once light blazed from the windows at midnight, and melodious canticles as of angels, resounded beneath its holy roof.

Enter now with me the church of Portiuncula, our Lady of the Angels. It has just been presented to "the poor beggar of Christ" for his own, and the Blessed Virgin has given him to understand, that among all temples consecrated under her name, this is the one for which she has the greatest attachment. It is night, and Francis is on his knees to recommend his family to her protection. A splendid light reveals to him, our Saviour Jesus Christ, His holy Mother, and a multitude of angels, who cast upon him

looks of great benignity. "O most holy Lord," he exclaims in adoration, "King of heaven, Redeemer of the world, sweet love; and thou, O Queen of Angels, by what excess of goodness do you come down from heaven into this small and poor chapel?" Hear the reply: "I am come with my Mother to settle you and yours in this place, which is very dear to us." In this holy sanctuary of the Queen of Angels, the Order of St. Francis grew into maturity with our Lady's blessing. Here St. Francis trained up men according to his own heart, which was according to the heart of God;—men meek and humble of heart like our Blessed Lord, but strong in the Spirit of God; men mortified in body, but

superior to bodily corruption,—men who would go forth and convince the world by the peace they brought along with them, that indeed the mild power is great, and God is wonderful in the variety of graces that attend His saints. The force of that gentleness in the holy tribunal of penance has worked miracles of grace, which none but God could count for number, as none save God could observe. From this holy sanctuary of Portiuncula, they went forth every day to beg their daily bread, which he called the bread of angels, "because," said he, "the good angels inspire the faithful to bestow it for the love of God. We eat the bread of angels when we live on that." Happy community! Thrice happy! Happy

master! Kind and benignant Lady. Francis was always tenderly attached to St. Mary of the Angels, and in his last will commanded his successors always to venerate it, and keep around it;—if driven away on one side, to return on the other.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OUR LORD IN THE MIDST.

As yet he had not heard them preach. One by one they stood up at his bidding, and let him have a sample of what they could do, and he listened in admiration as each in his turn, with the fire and energy of a new apostle,

discoursed so beautifully on the subject allotted to him. At the conclusion, Jesus Christ appeared in the midst of them, in the form of a very beautiful young man, and gave His blessing to each in succession with wonderful benignity. As soon as our Lord was gone, Francis, in a transport of love, spoke himself to the assembled community, and the next morning, dividing Italy among them, sent them forth once more to convince men, that God's goodness had made him compassionate to a world loaded with crimes.

He reserved for himself Tuscany as being nearest to St. Mary of the Angels, and took care to leave there enough to sing the praises of their Lady and Mistress, and instruct the novices whom God

would send to join them. Going, they went from that most holy sanctuary, returning thither, they returned. St. Mary of the Angels was ever open to welcome her returning children. From time to time the Seraph himself animated them with new zeal in her service, with the following or similar discourses: "We have promised great things," my brethren, "and we have been promised greater. Let us keep the first, and let us sigh after the others: pleasure is of short duration, the penalty is eternal. Sufferings are light, glory is infinite. Many are called, but few are chosen. Each one will receive according to his deserts." Full of his spirit they travelled the world over, and each time came home and departed leading thousands captive to the love of

God. The devil was afraid of those early Franciscans.

One Easter Francis had occasion to go to Arezzo, a town from which the spirit of peace had long since departed, by reason of frequent and repeated quarrels and dissensions. Lodged in the suburbs, the servant of God suspected what was the matter. He could discern, by the penetration God gave him, devils in great variety, who excited the citizens to massacre each other, transported with joy at their own diabolical success. Sylvester, a priest, at his command, standing afar off, addressed them, "All you devils who are here, begone; go far from hence. It is in the name of God, and of His servant Francis, that I call upon you to go." Peace in that same instant returned to

the town; the devils of discord departed; inveterate enemies, they knew not how nor why, found themselves on a good understanding, and Francis, in spite of himself, recognised as the instrument of reconciliation, was brought into town in triumph, where, in the great public square, he preached on the love of peace and the means of preserving it; teaching that quarrels come from and are promoted by the evil spirit. They brought him a child, deformed from its birth. He took it into his arms, and forthwith it became straight.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ANOTHER JOURNEY TO ROME.

In the year 1216, Francis undertook again to visit the holy city; and having blessed his assembled disciples, set out with this parting exhortation: "In the name of the Lord, go forth modestly. Let no idle or useless words be heard amongst you. Behave in such manner that whosoever may see or hear you may be moved to devotion. Proclaim peace to all men, but have it in your hearts as well as in your mouths. Give no one cause for anger; on the contrary, by your own mildness, induce every one to feel benignly. We are called to heal the wounded, console the afflicted, and to

bring back those who err. Many may seem to you to be members of the devil, who will one day be disciples of Jesus Christ." He then set out to recommend his labors to the Holy Apostles. As he prayed in the church of St. Peter, that the Holy Apostles would instruct him in poverty and the apostolic life, they appeared to him amid a profusion of light, embraced him, assured him that our Lord had favorably heard his prayers and tears, and left him full of interior joy. It was on this journey that he made the acquaintance and friendship of the holy Patriarch St. Dominic. While Francis was at Rome, Pope Innocent III. died; and on the 18th of July, Honorius III. was elected to succeed him, who confirmed the new institute, as Innocent had

before approved it. Returning to St. Mary of the Angels, the saint stopped awhile in the valley of Rieth, to convert the dissolute inhabitants. The wolves, as a farmer told him, made dreadful havoc among them; and the hail destroyed their crops. After convincing them that these scourges were the effects of God's justice, he promised their deliverance if they did penance for their sins, and the condition was accepted. Nothing more was heard of wolves, and when it hailed in the vicinity, the clouds went off in another direction. He got back to St. Mary of the Angels in January, 1218, where God, to guard him against any emotion of pride, permitted a severe temptation. For several days he was dreadfully depressed; nor did he get any

relief till one day during the fervor of his prayer our Lord thus spoke: "Francis, if thou hadst the faith of a grain of mustard seed, and wert to say to this mountain, Go hence, it would go." "What mountain?" he inquired. "The mountain," said our Lord, "is the temptation." Weeping and trembling himself, the saint replied, "Thy will be done," and immediately was relieved.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FRANCIS AND THE SULTAN.

THIRSTING, in the excess of charity, to shed his blood for the love of Christ, in the following year, 1219, the new apostle of the love of God bent his steps

eastward. The army of Crusaders lay siege to Damietta, the stronghold of Egypt. The Sultan of Damascus, with a much more numerous army lay behind the entrenchments, and with his brother, the Sultan of Egypt, gained a signal victory over the Christians. At this period, Francis arrived, or rather, just on the eve of the battle, and told the commanders openly, that if they joined fight they would be beaten. But minds were then too much excited to desist. On the 29th of August the day went against them, and the saint proved a prophet. Burning for the conversion of the Saracens, Francis betook himself to prayer, and set out for the camp of the infidels with one companion. The Saracens met them strolling, rushed upon them as

wolves on sheep, insulted, beat, and bound them. "I am a Christian," said Francis, "lead me to your master," and so they did. Meledin asked who sent them, and why they came. "God sends me," said the saint, "to teach you and your people the way of salvation." Francis then unfolded the principal points of Catholic faith, and Meledin became so mild and tractable, that the infidels were astonished. The saint even offered to pass through a great fire unburnt, in confirmation of the truth, would his own infidel priests undertake as much, which they refused. Instead of doing any harm, Meledin dismissed him most affectionately, and sent him home with every mark of honor. Some think that a few years after, on his deathbed, the Sultan

called for a priest and was baptized. One thing is certain, a century after the death of St. Francis, the Sultan of Egypt gave the Holy Sepulchre in care of the Franciscan friars, and to this day they watch it day and night.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THIRD JOURNEY TO ROME.

In 1222, Francis set out again for the threshold of the Apostles, and as he went God worked many splendid miracles by his hand. In the town of Toscanella, he was entertained by a knight, whose only son was lame in both legs, in his whole body a picture of suffering. The father

asked him to procure the cure of his son from God. Pressed by repeated entreaties, though esteeming himself unworthy to be heard for others, the saint placed his hands upon him, and made the sign of the cross over the boy, who, at the same moment stood upright and firm on his legs, and was entirely cured.

At Rome he made the acquaintance of a certain nobleman who invited him to dine. The host being less punctual than the saint, Francis joined a group of poor, to whom they were giving a meal, and commenced to eat with them. When the nobleman got home, he declared he would not take dinner, if Francis did not come; when, turning round to look out of the window, he spied him in the yard, with a group of beggars. Descending forth-

with, he placed himself on the ground, level with him, with these words, "Brother Francis, since you won't dine with me, I am come to dine with you."

There was a little child, called John, whom he requested Francis to bless, who took him in his arms, and foretold that he would one day be Sovereign Pontiff, which afterwards really happened. In the year 1277, he was chosen Pope, and took the name of Nicholas III. Francis predicted, at the same time, the benefits which his own order would receive from that child. "I see them already," said he, "in his little hands."

From Rome he turned aside to visit the grotto of St. Benedict, where still existed the thornbush into which that patriarch threw himself to overcome a temp-

tation of the flesh. In admiration at such fervor, Francis kissed it, and made over it the sign of the cross, when God changed it into a beautiful rose-bush, whose flowers have served on more than one occasion since to cure the sick.

On the same journey he went to venerate the relics of St. Nicholas at Bari, and visited the grotto on Mt. Gargano, consecrated by the apparition of the Archangel Michael. Stopping at the door of the sanctuary he would not enter, but only exclaimed, "I dare not go further; this place is awful, it is the dwelling of angels, whom men should respect in all ways." Let Christians remember these words as often as they approach that tabernacle where the Lord of Angels reposes under the veil of His sacra-

ment;—the Son of God, and the son of their lovely Queen.

Fatigued with travel and labor, the Seraph returned at length, once more, to his dear St. Mary of the Angels, to labor again for his own sanctification, as for a whole year he had for that of others —our Lord having determined to renew His passion in a pure man like Francis, in order to imprint it again in hearts from whence it was obliterated.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SACRED STIGMATA.

To attempt to recount all the miracles of St. Francis would exceed the narrow limits of this restricted outline. At

the end of the work the most important of them will be found classed under appropriate heads.

I hasten to recount the circumstances of that great and magnificent prodigy by which our Lord renewed in the body of His servant the memory of His own sacred passion, a miracle celebrated every year throughout the entire Roman Catholic Church by a proper mass and office, on the 17th day of September. You have seen the infant Francis crying in a manger. You shall now regard him in the other extreme of life, pierced with the five sacred wounds which now, as so many brilliant jewels, adorn the glorified body that once hung on the cross in bitter agony. The way it happened was this. Every year he

was accustomed to prepare himself for the Feast of St. Michael the archangel, by retiring for forty days previous, to Mount Alverno, and remaining during the whole time in prayer and solitude. Two years before his death, while he was thus occupied about the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14th), an angel appeared and gave him notice to prepare for all that God would do for him. He replied: "I am prepared for everything, and I shall not in any way oppose His holy will, provided He condescends to assist me with His grace. Although I am a useless man, and unworthy that God should cast a thought on me, nevertheless, as I am His servant, I beg He may act by me according to His good pleasure."

With a body weakened by austerities, he had now been on retreat since the Feast of the Assumption.

A day or two after, continuing still on the side of the mount, one morning, as he raised his eyes, his soul full of Jesus Christ crucified, he saw as it were a seraph, having six brilliant wings, and all on fire, descending towards him from the height of heaven. This seraph came with a most rapid flight to a spot in the air near to where the saint was, and then was seen between His wings, the figure of a crucified man, who had his hands and feet extended and fastened to a cross. Joy, mingled with grief and sorrow, spread over the soul of Francis. The presence of Jesus Christ caused him an excess of pleas-

ure, the spectacle of His crucifixion renewed within his own seeing distance, filled him with compassion, and made his soul feel as though a sword of sorrow had gone through it. At the same time, Jesus Christ, ever mild and gentle in the operation of His most stupendous works, spoke to his inmost soul as one friend to another, giving him to understand, that henceforth by the vehemence of God's love, which would inflame his soul, himself would be transformed into a perfect resemblance of the living crucified. Listen now to what followed, as it is related by St. Bonaventure: "The vision vanished, leaving his soul on fire with the ardor of a seraph, and imprinting on his body a figure similar to that of

a crucifix, as if his flesh, like softened wax, had received the impression of the letters of a seal. The marks of the nails began to show themselves on his hands and feet, as he had seen them on the figure of the crucified man. His feet and hands were seen to be perforated by nails in their middle; the heads of the nails, round and black, were on the inside of the hands, and on the upper parts of the feet; the points, which were rather long, and which came out on the opposite sides, were turned and raised above the flesh, from which they came out. There was, likewise, on his right side, a red wound, as if it had been pierced with a lance, and from this wound there often oozed a sacred blood, which soaked his tunic,

and anything he wore round his waist."

Thenceforth his heart and his flesh exulted. Thenceforth he might if he chose, exclaim with St. Paul: "Let no man be troublesome to me, for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body." Often and often had he thirsted for martyrdom;—to shed his blood for God, who had poured out His. Full of the desire, he had gone among the Saracens, and won them completely by his miraculous gentleness. The Sultan of Egypt, Meledin, could with difficulty restrain himself from being a Christian. Francis offered to pass over burning coals for him without detriment. Instead of putting him to death, Meledin sent him away loaded with honors, but thirsting as much as ever for a cruel

and bloody death, would he ever grant him so to testify his burning devotion to the passion of our Lord. Not so would God fulfil his wishes, but in a manner strange and unusual would he ornament him with His own blessed wounds.

Why O Seraph of Assisium did God, so visibly clothe you with Jesus Christ? Why did he fix his eyes on you to print you with those wounds at once the price of our redemption, the source of life, the pledge of salvation? Because you were himself within. Long since your soul unseen to men had been conformed to His own, you had taken lessons of the Sacred Heart; the mildness and modesty of Jesus Christ had possession of your demeanor. Blessed

purity of heart which came to see God! Inimitable meekness, which possessed and overpowered the earth of human corruption, and drew from on high the impress of the Lamb that was slain. The photograph of a friend is valuable but it may be lost: an impress such as that, imperishable for time and eternity, a pledge of love that can never grow cold, a device such as God only could conceive. Nimis honorati sunt amici tui Deus, nimis confortatus est principatus eorum.

Francis did his best to conceal the favor he had received. He kept his hands covered so that the nails should not be seen, and St. Clare made him a pair of slippers which covered those of his feet. And here I must not omit

to tell you who St. Clare was. From childhood her own compassion for the poor, and interior conformity to Jesus Christ had been that of St. Francis. As soon as she heard about him she wished to follow his rule of life. Before her birth her mother had a vision—a wonderful light seemed to break forth—and was made to understand that her future daughter would enlighten the world by the splendor of her holiness. The daughter of a noble lady, God brought her to speak with him, and under his guidance she with her sister St. Agnes had chosen God for their spouse, and heaven for their inheritance. At the time of the sacred Stigmata, the abbess of a community of consecrated virgins, she rejoiced her-

self, and glorified God for the joy of the father to whom he had entrusted her. To make him a pair of slippers, and help him keep his secret, was a satisfaction that gave her much delight. This slipper which is still preserved was so neatly contrived that the upper part covered the heads of the nails, and the underneath being somewhat raised, the points did not prevent his walking, for though these nails gave him pain, they did not take from him the use of either hands or feet.

But concealment was impossible. The author of the prodigy had himself disclosed the secret, and filled the hearts of the people with expectation. All had heard of it. The morning it occurred at break of day, they had seen

the mountain illuminated with a most brilliant light, and as he came down among them again on Michaelmas day, they ran in crowds to kiss his hands. As these were tied round with bandages he offered them the tips of his fingers. In a village near Arezzo they brought him a child of about eight years of age, who had been dropsical for years, whom he cured instantaneously by touching him. No wonder that hands so like our Lord's, should touch and heal as did His own.

As for himself the miracle left his body so weakened that it was evident he could not long survive, though his soul thirsted more than ever for the salvation of souls and to serve the lepers.

Carried about from place to place the crowd got around him, touched him, pressed upon him, brought the sick that he might but lay his hands upon them. Himself was sick and needed care.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"PRETIOSA IN CONSPECTU DOMINI MORS SANCTORUM EJUS."

In order that he might be nearer to Clare, who loved to take care of him, they brought him to a small and poor cell, near the convent of St. Damian. It was his desire to render up his soul to God there where he had received the spirit of grace, the church of St. Mary of the Angels. As he prayed

for patience to bear his pain, Jesus Christ thus addressed him: "Rejoice, it is through the way in which you are, that heaven is reached." Seeing his last hour draw near, he sent for Clare, as well as for a noble Roman lady who had befriended him, requesting her at the same time to bring along wax lights for his funeral.

Surrounded by these and a few chosen disciples, he exhorted them to persevere in the faith of the Church of Rome, and in their veneration for the church of St. Mary of the Angels, before whose altar lamps must be always kept burning. His own devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and to its chosen guardians, he declared in the following remarkable words, which were committed to writing on the spot:

"Our Lord gave me, and He still gives me, so much faith in priests, who live according to the forms of the holy Roman Church, because of their character, that if they were to persecute me, it would be still to them that I should have recourse. I mean to fear them, to love them, to honor them. What induces me to do this is, that I see nothing in this world so discerning of this same Son of God, the Most High, as His very sacred body, and His most holy blood, which they receive, and which they alone administer to others."

After delivering at length his last testament, of which the above is a part, he sent for his confessor, and ordered brother Angelo to sing in his presence

a canticle giving praise to God for all His creatures, as well as for death. At the conclusion of that canticle, we ourselves will take our stand around the deathbed of a saint, and watch his motions in the parting moments of dissolution.

Placing his arms one over the other in form of a cross, present and absent receive his last blessing, in the name and by virtue of Jesus crucified: "I leave you in the fear of the Lord. I go to God with great eagerness, and recommend you all to His favor." Calling then for the book of the Gospels, he made them read the passion from St. John, and that being ended, began himself to recite "Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi," until the last verse,

"Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name: the just wait for me till Thou reward me." In the very same instant Francis went to repose;—Saturday evening, the 4th day of October, in the year 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the beginning of the third since he received the Stigmata.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### HIS SOUL ENTERS HEAVEN.

On the same night that Francis died Brother Austin of Assisi, a just and saintly man, who was in the last stage of a severe illness, and had ceased to speak, suddenly exclaimed: "Wait for

me, my father, wait for me; I will go with you." The brethren, astonished, asked him who he was speaking to? "What," said he, "don't you see our father Francis, going up to heaven?" At that very moment his own soul separated itself from his body, and followed after.

Francis appeared also on the same night to the Bishop of Assisi, at the time on his way to the Church of St. Michael on Mount Gargano, and said: "I leave the world and am going up to heaven." The bishop found on his return that the apparition had appeared to him at the very time of the saint's death. Add to this that one of his own disciples, on the testimony of St. Bonaventure saw his blessed soul under

the figure of a brilliant star, rise upon a white cloud, above all the others, and go straight to heaven; giving us to understand at once the splendor of his sanctity, and the plenitude of grace and wisdom, which had rendered him worthy of entering into the regions of light and peace, where with Jesus Christ he enjoys a repose which will be eternal. He had found whom his soul loved, whom he would hold fast nor let Him go, who had brought his beautiful and gentle spirit in which His own was reflected, out of prison. Nor did He who had given that beautiful soul wings to fly and be at rest, forget to honor in the eyes of men, the prison He had brought it out of. The body disfigured by disease became all at once beauti-

ful beyond description; white as snow, with a crimson wound in the side, and black hard nails like iron protruding through the hands and feet. Clare endeavored to remove one of them, but could not; she had to content herself with dipping a piece of linen in the blood which exuded.

Miracles were multiplied, and in the year 1228 he was proposed to the veneration of the catholic faithful.

By the gentleness and love of St. Francis may God grant us a share of his spirit, his esteem for the eternal truths, his devotion to the Queen of Angels, such a taste of the sweetness of heaven as will make bitter in comparison every pleasure short of it. St. Stephen was full of grace and fortitude

when he saw the heavens opened above him; a glimpse of the same made Francis a saint. A thin veil, which faith easily penetrates, hides eternity from our own view. Yet penetrate it or not, there stands the awful reality behind the scenes. Heaven or Hell is my destination. A moment will determine. In that moment my God do not forget me, nor you O Virgin Queen of Mercy!

JESUS MARIA.

# APPENDIX,

EMBRACING MIRACLES AND PARTICULARS CONNECTED WITH THE LIFE, NOT PREVIOUSLY ALLUDED TO IN THE WORK

"Mirabilis Deus in Sanctis suis."
"God is wonderful in His saints."

## EFFECTS OF THE PRAYER OF FRANCIS.

MORIQUE, a religious of the Order of Cross-bearers, being sick and given over by his physicians, got himself recommended to the prayers of St. Francis, who willingly prayed for him, and mixed a little crumb of bread with the oil of the lamp which burned before the altar of St. Mary of the Angels, which he sent him with this message:

"The power of Jesus Christ will not only restore you to perfect health, but will cause you to become a generous soldier, to enter our militia and persevere in it." The sick man had hardly swallowed it, but he was quite cured, joined the saint, did great penance, and during a long life enjoyed perfect health.

As Francis prayed one day on a rock in the valley of Rieti, in the bitterness of his soul deploring his early life, he was assured by an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that his sins and all the temporal punishment due to them had been remitted. This revelation almost overpowered him with joy.

One day the abbot of the monastery of St. Justin, in the diocese of Perugia, met Francis, and alighted from his horse

to speak to him. As he recommended himself humbly to his prayers, Francis replied: "I will pray with all my heart," and they parted. At a little distance, the saint said to his companion: "Wait a little, brother, I will here perform my promise." He knelt to pray; and while he prayed, the abbot, who was riding on, felt his mind inflamed with such sweetness of devotion as threw him in an ecstasy. When he returned to himself, he became aware that it was entirely owing to the prayer of St. Francis.

Add to this, that St. Francis obtained from God, by his fervent prayer, a vision which induced Pope Innocent III. to approve his Order in spite of every remonstrance of its enemies to the con-

trary. In short, the prayer of St. Francis was efficacious for every good, since it was prompted by the Spirit of God. The very desires of his heart were attended to by God, who fulfils the wishes of those who fear Him. One day, fatigued with excessive travel, weak, languid and exhausted, he felt a disgust for every kind of food. One thing only he felt as though he could eat if he had it;—some wild fowl. Forthwith, as he was speaking of it to his companion, a stranger brought him one ready dressed, which he handed to him with these words: "Servant of God, take what the Lord sends thee," after which he disappeared. Francis ate willingly of what the goodness of God had provided for him, and was so

strengthened that he continued the journey, as one who scarcely feels the earth upon which he treads. His prayer was sometimes so fervent that fire seemed to issue from his countenance, and all who beheld him when he prayed, were inspired with devotion, so much as sometimes to be raised off the ground. When at Rome, while praying in one of the chapels of the church of St. Peter, the holy Apostle, in company with St. Paul, appeared to him surrounded by lights, embraced him, instructed him and left the Saint full of consolation. A great indulgence connected with the church of Portiuncula should be noticed here, as one of the effects of the prayer of St. Francis. The more he prayed, the more God

gave him light to apprehend the wretched state of sinners. Moved to compassion at the sight of so much blindness, one night as he solicited their conversion on bended knees, an angel appeared and told him that Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother were waiting for him in the church, accompanied by a host of celestial spirits. Greatly rejoiced to find it true, he cast himself at the feet of the Son of God, who thus addressed him, "Francis, the zeal which you and your followers have for the salvation of souls is such, that it entitles you to solicit something in their favour, for the glory of My name." "Our most holy Father," he replied, "I entreat Thee, although I am but a miserable sinner, to have the goodness to grant to men,

that all those who shall visit this church may receive a plenary indulgence of all their sins, after having confessed them to a priest; and I beg the blessed Virgin, Thy Mother, the general advocate of human kind, to intercede that I may obtain this request." The blessed Virgin did intercede, and our Lord again spoke. "Francis, what thou askest is great; but thou wilt receive still greater favors; I grant thee this one; I desire thee, nevertheless, to go to my Vicar, to whom I have given the power to bind and to loose, and to solicit him for the same indulgence. The companions of the Saint overheard everything from their cells, and saw the light which filled the church, and the angels. Fear made them keep their distance. In the morning Francis

assembled them, imposed silence and set out for Rome, where he no sooner recounted the object of his visit, than the Pope answered, "It is my desire that it be granted to you." But he restricted it to one day in the year, which was afterwards fixed, as we shall presently describe.

"He who in prayer," says St. Teresa, "carries a large vessel of confidence to the fountain of divine mercy, comes away with it well filled." St. Francis experienced this, asking of God for more than many before him had ever dared. Might not our Lord at the present day reproach some Catholics, "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." "When one is sorrowful and uneasy,"

said St. Francis, "he should have immediate recourse to prayer, and so remain before God until such time as the joy of salvation is restored to him."

### FRANCIS DOES WONDERS BY THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

The virtue of the cross goes with its sign, and from the hands of St. Francis lost none of its efficacy.

In the city of Narni was a man who had lost the use of his limbs for five months from palsy. Francis cured him, employing no other remedy than a sign of the cross, which he made over his whole body, and by virtue of the same sign he restored sight to a blind woman. At Castello he cured a child, who had an ulcer, by making the sign of the cross on the dressing which covered it. At

Terni by the sign of the cross he rendered some sour wine perfectly good, and that before persons who had tasted it in its acid state. In the same place a young lad had just been crushed by the fall of a wall. Having had him brought to him he applied himself to prayer, and extending himself on the corpse, he restored him to life.

Finding himself very faint in a certain place near the borough of St. Urban, he asked for some wine. As there was none to be had there, he had some water brought to him, which he blessed by making the sign of the cross over it, and it was instantly changed into most excellent wine. The little that he took, refreshed him so quickly that it was estimated a double mira-

cle. At Foligno the sign of the cross which he made on the house of his host, protected it from various accidents, and particularly from fire. Being several times in danger by the contiguity of burning houses adjoining, the flames were seen to take an opposite direction.

### THE HUMILITY OF FRANCIS.

Of all the virtues, this, the foundation of them all, shone most eminently in the Seraph-saint. One instance would be sufficient were others wanting. He constantly refused to be ordained a priest. We will cite here but one other example; a conversation which he made one night with one of his religious by way of useful recreation. "My dear brother," he said to Leo, "we must not

let this time pass without praising God's holy name and confessing our own misery. This is the verse which I will say: 'O brother Francis! you have committed so many sins in this world, that you have deserved to be plunged into hell.' And you, brother Leo, your response will be, 'it is true you deserve to be in the bottom of hell.'" Leo promised to obey, though unwillingly but instead of that, he said, "Brother Francis, God will do so much good through your means, that you will be called into Paradise." Francis reproved him for his disobedience, and tried again, but with no better success. And so they went on until Leo was obliged to confess that the Spirit of God put the contrary words into his mouth in spite

of himself. He was constantly saying, "Man is nothing but what he is before God, and no more."

To those who called him a saint, he used to say, "Don't praise me, I may still sin; I have no assurance that I shall not; a person must never be praised whose end cannot be known." And he addressed the following words to himself: "Francis, if the Most High had bestowed so many favors on a thief as He has on you, he would be much more grateful than you are." This is the spirit of Catholic Saints. Lost in the thought of their own nothingness, when they opened their mouths it was to praise and glorify God and His saints; to think little and say less about themselves. An absence of personal senti-

ment, and a fulness of praise, marked their speech and their compositions.

### HIS PATIENCE AND MORTIFICATION.

Charity increases in proportion as concupiscence is deadened. Hence heroic charity ordinarily presupposes heroic mortification. St. Francis knew this. He called his body brother ass who required to be frequently beaten, despised, and kept well at work. Red hot irons applied to his neck during sickness produced no outward symptom of pain. He often protested that no kind of suffering, whether tribulation, distress, famine, nakedness, or persecution should ever separate him from the love of Jesus Christ. He sometimes proposed to himself and companions, imaginary

distresses such as bad treatment, insults, cold, hunger, etc., which might happen; in order to make them feel prepared with God's grace to meet with resignation every occurrence His providence might permit to befal them.

### HIS COMPASSION FOR THE POOR.

From infancy, the sight of distress moved him to self-sacrifice and exertion. Often was he seen to take the burdens from the poor he met on the road, and bear them on his own weak shoulders. A cloak that had been given him, he gave in charity to a poor woman, who had two little children who were almost naked. One day, when he was about to preach, he was entreated by a poor and infirm man to recom-

mend him to his hearers. Turning to his companion, he declared, with tears in his eyes, that he felt the man's ills as if they were his own. He served the sick in the hospitals, and in their own houses, with his own hands, performing for the most ill-favored and ungrateful of them offices of charity, the sight of which melted their hearts, and inflamed them with the love of God.

On one occasion he cured a leper by washing him, and what was better yet, obtained for him by his prayers contrition for his sins, which had been the occasion of his disease. At St. Mary of the Angels, he gave the book of the Gospels to a poor old woman who came to beg, at the same time observing, that it would be more agreeable to God to

use it so in relieving extreme necessity, than to read out of it. At another time, as he gave his cloak to a poor shivering beggar, he said to his companion, that, did he not do it, he would be afraid lest Almighty God should accuse him of theft for keeping it.

### HOW FRANCIS RAISED HIS SOUL TO GOD BY THE HELP OF HIS CREATURES, AND THE CONTROL HE HAD OVER THEM.

To Francis, all creatures were so many mirrors, in which he saw reflected the sovereign beauty, and by means of which he raised himself up to it, and excited himself to the love of God. Considering in them a common principle of existence with himself, he was

used to call them his brothers and sisters, and to regard them with a certain affection, as so many streams emanating from the goodness of God.

Among animals, those he preferred were such as reminded him of the mildness of Jesus Christ, or were the symbol of some particular virtue. For this reason, lambs were peculiarly agreeable to him.

"Why," said he, to a butcher, "do you hang and torture my brethren the lambs?"

Seeing some birds caught in a net, he addressed them: "Ye doves, my dear little sisters, simple, innocent, and pure, why did you allow yourselves to be caught thus."

A lad went to Sienna, to sell some

turtle doves which he had taken alive. Francis met him on the way and said: "These are innocent birds, which are compared in Scripture to chaste and faithful souls. I beg you earnestly not to put them into the hands of persons who would kill them, but to confide them to me." They were given to him, and he put them immediately into his bosom; he spoke to them as if they were capable of reasoning; promising to prepare a nest for them, where they might fulfil the intentions of their Creator. Having taken them to his convent, near the walls of Sienna, he forced his stick into the ground before the gate, and the stick became by the following day a large evergreen oak. He let the turtle doves fly into it, de-

siring them to make their nests there, which they did for many succeeding years, and they were so familiar with the monks, that they came to feed from their hands. Francis promised the young man who gave them, that he would become a member of the Order, and acquire eternal glory. Thus Francis loved God through the affection he showed His creatures. The carol of birds seemed to him to invite mankind to publish the glory of their Creator. He liked to remark the gray and ash color of larks, the color he had chosen for his Order, that they might often think on death. He liked to see them fly up into the air and sing, after getting crumbs of bread, as if to thank God. In return for his own perfect

subjection to the law of God, God gave him the control of animals, as He did to Adam before he fell from innocence.

The first time that St. Francis went to Mount Alverno, he was surrounded by a multitude of birds, who lit upon his head, shoulders, breast and hands to evince their pleasure at his arrival; and at the hour of the night when he arose to pray, a hawk came to make a noise at the door of his cell: God who made the ravens serve Elias, caused His own feathered songsters to testify to the sanctity of His servant Francis. A sheep which had been presented to him at St. Mary of the Angels, bent its fore feet at the altar of the Blessed Virgin so often as the religious went to sing the office. Such instances prove,

says St. Bonaventure, that the Saints are tender hearted. It was noticed that animals showed a sort of affection for Francis and applauded what he did in their way.

Having left Assisi one day to go to preach near the town of Bevagna, he saw, on a particular spot, a number of birds collected, of various kinds, and he went up to them and said: "My brethren, listen to the word of God; you have great reason to praise your Creator; He has covered you with feathers; He has given you wings wherewith to fly; He has placed you in the air where the breathing is so pure, and He provides you with every thing which is necessary, without giving you any trouble."

While he spoke, the birds remained motionless, those which were perched on the branches of trees, bending their heads, as if to listen. Spreading their wings, opening their beaks, they exhibited every symptom of joy, nor took to flight till he had given them leave, and made over them the sign of the cross to bless them.

At Gubio he tamed a wolf, and took it into the public square with him when he preached, and made an agreement with it, that it should do no injury, so long as the inhabitants would provide it with food, which was faithfully attended to on both sides. Wolves are sometimes sent, said he, to warn sinners to return to their duty. During two years, the animal came to the town to feed, and did

no injury to any one. At Carinola, the holy man tamed in a similar manner a fox that stole all the poultry of a poor old woman.

### THE LOVE THE BLESSED VIRGIN HAD FOR FRANCIS, AND THE WAY THE DAY OF THE INDULGENCE OF PORTIUNCULA CAME TO BE FIXED.

The gentle and most amiable Queen of heaven was thus pleased one day to bring together two of her faithful children. St. Dominic being in Rome, had a miraculous vision, as he prayed in the Church of St. Peter. He saw the Son of God seated on the right hand of His Father, who rose up greatly irritated against sinners; holding in His hand three darts for the extirpation of the

proud, the avaricious, and the voluptuous. His holy Mother threw herself at His feet, and prayed for merey, saying that she had persons who would remedy the evil; and she at the same time introduced to Him Dominic and Francis, as being proper persons for reforming the world, and re-establishing piety; this pacified Jesus Christ. Dominic, who had never seen Francis, recognized him next day, and ran tc embrace him: "You are my companion; we will work together; let us be strictly united, and no one will be able to master us."

One night as Francis prayed in his cell, about the beginning of the year 1223, the devil tempted him to think that he fatigued himself with too much prayer, being an old man. Aware of

the malice, Francis retired to the woods, and threw himself naked into a bush of briars and thorns, till he was covered with blood. A brilliant light which surrounded him, discovered to him a great number of red and white roses, although it was the month of January, and the winter severe. Angels appeared and said to him: "Francis, hasten to return to the Church; Jesus Christ is there, together with His Blessed Mother." Miraculously clothed in a new white habit, he gathered twelve roses of each color, and went to the Church. After a profound adoration, thus he prayed: "Most holy Father, Lord of heaven and earth, Saviour of man; deign, through Thy great mercy, to fix the day of the indulgence which Thou hast been pleased

to grant to this sacred place." Our Lord answered him, that it was His desire that it should be from the evening of the vigil of the day when St. Peter the apostle was delivered from his chains, to the evening of the following day, and told him to take to the Pope some white and red roses as testimonials of the truth of this fact. Francis took three of each color. The next day Francis, by the Pope's desire, pronounced the following words in the presence of the cardinals: "The will of God is, that whosoever shall, with a contrite and humble heart, after having confessed his sins, and received absolution from a priest, enter the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, in the diocese of Assisi, between the first vespers of the first day of August and the

vespers of the second day, shall obtain an entire remission of all the sins he may have committed from his baptism until that moment." This great indulgence of Portiuncula now extends to all Franciscan churches throughout the world.

### HIS PENETRATION OF HEARTS AND GIFT OF PROPHECY.

St. Francis not only penetrated the inmost recesses of consciences, and beheld their secrets as in a clear mirror, but spoke of things which were going on in his absence, and foretold things to come. Urged by a strong desire to see him, and get his blessing, two brethren of the Order came to Grecio. They were much disappointed to find, on their arrival, that he had just retired to his cell. As they

started to return, contrary to his custom, he came out, called them back, blessed them in the name of Jesus Christ, and made the sign of the cross upon their foreheads as they had wished. Their arrival, and the desire of their heart could not have been known to him in any ordinary way.

Near the convent of Mount Colombo there was a nest of crested larks, the mother of which came every day to feed out of his hand, and took sufficient for herself and her brood. When they began to be strong, she brought the little ones to him. He perceived that the strongest of the brood pecked the others, to keep them from taking up the grains. Displeased, he addressed the little bird as if it could understand him: "Cruel

and insatiable little animal, you will die miserably, and the greediest animals will not be willing to eat your flesh." Some days after it was drowned in a basin, and neither cats nor dogs would go near it when offered them.

The letter which he wrote, or rather dictated, to Dame Jacqueline, a noble Roman lady who had befriended him, shows us that he foresaw the precise day of his death. This letter was dated Sunday, the 28th of September, and thus commences:

"To the Lady Jacqueline, the servant of the most High, Brother Francis, the poor little servant of Jesus Christ, sends greeting, and communication with the Holy Ghost, in Jesus Christ.

"Know, my very dear lady, that Jesus

Christ, blessed forever, has done me the favor to reveal to me the end of my life: it is very near. For which reason, if you wish to see me alive, set out as soon as you shall have received this letter, and hasten to St. Mary of the Angels, for if you arrive later than Saturday, you will find me dead," etc. etc.

One more example may suffice. At Calano, a common soldier pressed him so hard to come and dine with him that he could not refuse. Taking a priest along, the poor family received him joyfully, and the Saint, as he was used, began to pray. He then said to the soldier privately: "My brother and my host, you see I have acceded to your request in coming to dine with you. Now, follow my advice and make haste; for it is not

here, but elsewhere that you will dine. Confess your sins with as much exactness and sorrow as you can; the Lord will reward you for having received His poor ones with such good religious intentions." The soldier made his confession to the companion of Francis, and prepared himself as well as he could for death. He then sat down with the others to table, and a minute afterwards expired. He entertained a prophet and received the reward of one.

At Fabriano, as Francis stood preaching in the market place, some workmen employed at a palace, made such a hammering, that his voice was drowned. Disregarding his entreaties that they would be still for a little, he said to the bystanders: "The work of those who are

building that house will be of no use, because the Lord did not build it." He added that it would soon fall, but that neither man nor beast would be injured by it, and a few days afterwards all came true. How the saint foretold of Nicholas the third, yet a child, that he would one day be Pope, has been already alluded to.

### ST. FRANCIS RAISES THE DEAD TO LIFE.

At Terni, a young lad had been crushed by the fall of a wall. Having had him brought to him, he applied himself to prayer, and extending himself on the corpse, as the prophet Eliseus had done on the child of the Sunamite, he restored him to life.

In the county of Narni, he was lodged

in the house of a worthy man who was in great affliction for the death of his brother, who had been drowned, and whose body could not be found, so that it might be buried. After having privately prayed for some time, he marked a spot in the river where he said that the body certainly was at the bottom, where it had been stopped by the entanglement of the clothes. They dived there, and the body was found, which he restored to life in the presence of the whole family.

The inhabitants of Gaeta admiring the power which God gave to His servant, entreated him to stay some time in their town, and to permit them to build there a convent for his Order. He assented to this, and the work was commenced forth-

with. While the work was in progress, a carpenter was crushed by the falling of a beam. As the other workmen were carrying him home, Francis, who was returning from the country, met them, and directed them to lay the dead man on the ground; he then made the sign of the cross on him, took him by the hand, called him by his name, and commanded him to arise. The dead man rose immediately, and went back to his work. This is well known in the country by successive tradition, and a small chapel has been erected, under due authority, on the spot where the miracle was performed, in order to perpetuate the memory thereof.

In a certain town whither Francis had turned his steps, all the inhabitants had

gone to the great square to hear him preach. A servant maid who had been left in one of the houses to tend a child, wishing to hear the sermon, abandoned her charge. Coming back, she found it dead, and half boiled in a copper of hot water into which it had fallen. She took it out, and the better to hide the disaster from the father and mother, shut it up in a trunk. The parents, however, learn their misfortune. It was their only child. Francis had been invited to dine. During time of dinner, they tried hard to suppress their tears; he did his best to inspire them with a holy joy. At the end of dinner, he asked for some apples. They had none. Pointing to the trunk which had the child in it, he said: "Look in that, and you will find some." It was

of no use to assure him there were none there. He insisted on having the trunk opened, and now appeared the consolation that God, to whom nothing is hard or impossible, had in store for them. There was the child alive and well, and laughing, too, holding an apple in each hand. Transported with joy, the father reposed him in the arms of his saintly benefactor.

In a word, Francis was a man who cast out devils, raised the dead to life, cured the sick, made animals obey him, was listened to as an angel when he spoke.

The cord which he wore about his waist fell into the hands of a man who went from house to house where there were any sick, soaked it in water, and

gave it them to drink, a draught which was invariably followed by a cure.*

* A word on the cord of St. Francis will not be out of place here. After the saint had begun to preach, the crowd who presently strove to abandon their houses and possessions for the love of God, was so great, that there seemed to be danger lest family ties made sacred by God himself, should be broken up. To meet this difficulty, the Seraph instituted a third Order for persons living in the retirement of their own families. Wearing a knotted cord similar to his own, and properly blessed, such should become affiliated to the Order, and by complying with certain easy conditions, enjoy a participation in its good works and indulgences. St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, to whom St. Francis made a present of his mantle, because she shared his spirit, belonged to this third Order, as did also St. Louis, of France, and a host of others. Sweet bond and chain of the love of God, by which Francis, raised above the earth, draws heavenward those, who, having their loins girt about, and the lamp of charity burning in their hands, cherish his spirit. Arrived at the end of my work, one word in conclusion. To a certain extent, like every other matter of fact narrative, it is a compilation. To those whose labors have served me, or rather through me done service to God, "*Jucundus homo qui miseretur et commodat.*" To you, dear reader, for the love of God, commend me in life and death, to the protection of St. Francis.

## St. Clare.

The lady Hortulana of Assisi who, with the consent of her husband, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, had three daughters, Clare, Agnes, and Beatrix. About to be confined of the first, and praying to God before a crucifix in the church, she heard a voice, "Woman, fear not, thou wilt bring forth without danger a light which will illuminate a vast space."

The child Clare was the very model of a good girl, who loved to pray, and whose virtue drew down upon her the admiration of all the town.

St. Francis heard about her as she had of him, and conceived a great desire to present her to Jesus Christ.

They saw each other several times, and God did His own work in her soul. An interior view of eternal happiness, filled her heart with intense love of God, and loathing of extravagant dress. She came to assist at the distribution of palms in the church on Palm Sunday, and on the following night left Assisi for St. Mary of the Angels, where Francis, and attendants in waiting, cut off her hair and consecrated her to God, under the protection of the Queen of Virgins. All bore lighted tapers in their hands, and the religious sang canticles of joy. The cruel persecution which Clare suffered from her parents and relations in consequence of this sacrifice, made her sister Agnes join her company in the Benedictine convent of

St. Paul whither Francis had conducted the new bride of our Lord. Francis cut off her hair too, and the sisters in future labored together, and attracted, by their virtues, a multitude of pure and innocent souls. Clare afterwards became abbess of St. Damian. During life and after death her prayers were most efficacious. She wished one day the consolation to converse with Francis, unwilling to come, though invited to a repast. Yet at the supplication of Clare, God brought him in spite of himself and kept him there in an ecstacy during several hours. On a certain occasion three loaves of bread sent by Clare, fed thirty missionaries, and left enough to spare. To one of the sisters in her monastery she restored lost speech,

to another deaf one hearing. Fevers, dropsy, insanity itself, fled at her touch. The Saracens had besieged her monastery. Sick in bed she had herself carried to the gate and with her the pyx which contained the Blessed Sacrament—before which she thus prayed: "Do not deliver to the beasts, O Lord, those who confess to thee, and guard your servants whom you have redeemed with your precious blood." Then a voice was heard, "I will always guard you." A part of the Saracens fled; others, struck with blindness, fell off the walls they were scaling. As herself was dying, the Blessed Virgin stood before her bed in the midst of a crowd of white robed virgins.

"Upon the feast of St. Clare," says St.

Teresa, "as I was about to communicate, she appeared to me in great beauty, and told me to be of good courage, and to go on with the work I had commenced, and that she would assist me. Her words proved true: a house of her Order, near to this house, helps to support us."

LAUS DEO ET MARIÆ.

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